

## Crisis Intervention Training

*Projects Expand and Evaluate De-escalation Strategies for Police Interactions with Persons with Mental Illness*

**I**t was late on a Saturday night when Daryl Jones walked into the Exxon convenience store on Interstate 35. Although he made no attempt to intimidate anyone, his erratic and confused behavior—mumbling and pacing of the aisles—made both customers and employees uncomfortable. Finally, the clerk called out from behind the counter for Daryl to leave. When Daryl ignored him, the police were called.

The arrival of the first police unit appeared to irritate and upset Daryl, and the officers' loud and forceful commands only seemed to incite him further. Just when the situation seemed to be escalating to a dangerous level, another patrol unit rolled onto the scene.

This newly arrived officer quietly assumed control of the situation. Taking a non-confrontational approach, the officer kept his distance while actively and empathetically listening to Daryl. His assurances and demeanor helped calm the situation to the point in which Daryl went with the officers to a local mental health facility for assessment and observation. It was not until later that authorities determined that Daryl, who has been diagnosed with schizophrenia, had neglected his medication regimen.



In the past, confrontations such as Daryl's had the potential of ending violently—and sometimes tragically—for both citizens and officers. In this instance, however, the officer successfully diffused the situation by using **See Page Four**

## Austin MHMR Center Shows Appreciation to Hogg Foundation

**T**he Hogg Foundation for Mental Health will be recognized for its contributions to Austin and the Austin Travis County Mental Health Mental Retardation Center with an Outstanding Organization Award from the New Milestones Foundation at its annual Champions event on September 25 in Austin.

The award is in appreciation for the Hogg Foundation's support of mental health issues over the preceding year. In January, the Foundation joined with Austin Mayor Will Wynn—who is also being honored with the Outstanding Leadership Award—and the Austin Travis County MHMR Center to establish a Mayor's Mental Health Task Force that explored ways to become a mentally fit community.

Soon after, the Foundation also awarded ATCMHMR \$100,000 to support the establishment of a Resiliency Clinic for brief therapeutic interventions and assistance in applying for appropriate medications for adults at the center. The award was part of the Foundation's Special Mental Health Services Initiative, which provided bridging grants to non-profit service providers across Texas who experienced either funding cuts or increases in the demand for services due to funding reductions at other agencies.

The New Milestones Foundation was founded in 1982 to oversee fundraising efforts and support programs of the Austin Travis County

MHMR Center in expanding awareness, eradicating stigma, and helping those affected by mental illness or substance abuse issues.

"We are pleased to have received such warm recognition by Austin Travis County MHMR," said Dr. King E. Davis, executive director of the Hogg Foundation. "We sincerely value our opportunities for partnership with ATCMHMR and other centers in the state."

In addition to the Hogg Foundation, other Champions' Award winners include ESPN Sports Radio Texas for the Outstanding Media Award, The Settlement Club of Austin for an Outstanding Organization Award, and

Jefferson Nelson, M.D., as Outstanding Medical Professional.

The Champion's Award event will be held from 12:30 p.m. until 2:00 p.m. at the Renaissance Austin Hotel, 9721 Arboretum Boulevard. The event will feature Academy Award-winning actress Patty Duke, who in mid-life was diagnosed and treated for bipolar disorder. Having shared the story of her recovery in the autobiographies *Call Me Anna* and *I, Patty* has made Duke one of the foremost spokespersons on living successfully with a mental illness in the country.

For more information on the award or the Champion's event, contact the ATCMHMR at 512-440-4051.



The *Hogg Foundation News* is a quarterly newsletter of the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health.

Since 1940, the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health has responded to its mandate "to develop and conduct... a broad mental health program of great benefit to the people of Texas" (Miss Ima Hogg, 1939), by funding grants for both mental health service projects, research efforts, and policy initiatives throughout the state. The Hogg Foundation defines mental health broadly to encompass psychological, biological, and social factors that may affect one's overall mental well-being, but affords particular interest to proposals that address its priority areas of mental health services, research, policy, and education.

The Foundation is an administrative unit of The University of Texas at Austin and accomplishes its mandate through public education and grantmaking to mental health service, research, and policy projects in the state of Texas.

The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health also fulfills its benefactors' mandate by "operating" its own programs—including public education, convening, and program evaluation—to the benefit and enrichment of organizations and communities statewide.

For more information about the Hogg Foundation and its programs, please visit the Foundation's web site at [www.hogg.utexas.edu](http://www.hogg.utexas.edu).

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# News and Notes

## Article on Evaluator Certification to be Published

The *Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice* will publish an article entitled "Training, Certification, and Regulation of Forensic Evaluators" in an upcoming issue. The article was co-authored by Hogg Foundation for Mental Health Associate Director for Policy and Law, Dr. Lynda E. Frost, and Hogg Foundation Research Assistants Rebecca de Camara from The University of Texas at Austin School of Law and Dr. Tara Earl from The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work. It examines eligibility requirements for all 50 states for mental health professionals who evaluate a defendant's mental competency or sanity in criminal cases. Specific attention is given to well-elaborated certification programs in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

## Update on the 79th Texas Legislature

The Hogg Foundation is again publishing *Legislative Update: A Citizen's Guide to the Mental Health-Related Actions of the 79th Texas Legislature* to help mental health stakeholders to better understand the nature and scope of changes to mental health issues and policies by the 79th Texas Legislature.

The publication's format divides the mental health-related actions into issue areas, provides a brief background of the reasons for specific legislation, and explains how the statute intends to address the situation.

For more information about the *Legislative Update*, or to pre-order copies, contact the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health by phone at 512-471-5041 or by email at [comm@hogg.utexas.edu](mailto:comm@hogg.utexas.edu).



## Speakers Colloquium Highlights Grad Work

The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health's Mental Health Speaker's Series featured the dissertation work of its three Moore Summer Fellows on August 17, 2005.

All three are graduate students in the Department of Sociology at The University of Texas at Austin. Margaret Vaaler gave a presentation entitled, "Patterns of Help-Seeking from the Clergy for Domestic Violence." Carol Ann Chavez presented "Transforming Health Care Approaches for a Gender Diverse Society." Emily Durden's presentation was entitled, "The Association Between Divorce and Depression: Does Age Matter?"

The Harry E. and Bernice M. Moore Summer Fellowship is awarded annually to graduate students of sociology who have a primary interest in research and study of the human experience in crises. "Crisis" is defined broadly to incorporate a wide range of human experiences, such as wars, terrorism, AIDS, divorce, domestic or gang violence, as well as more traditionally defined natural crises such as tornadoes, floods, residents' response to nuclear waste clean-up sites, etc. The focus of the fellowship reflects Dr. Harry E. Moore's concern for and sociological contributions to this area of investigation.

The fellowships provide a stipend of \$4,000 (and a \$2000 housing allowance for students outside the area) to assist in researching a scholarly publication or completing a dissertation.

## 2005 KIDS COUNT Report Available

In partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health is making available free copies of the *Kids Count Data Book* and the *Kids Count Pocket Guide*.

The *Kids Count Data Book* provides a state-by-state statistical portrait of the health, educational, social, and economic condition of American children. Many find the *Data Book* to be a reliable source of unbiased, statistical information about the condition of children and families in America.

Interested persons are invited to order the book via email at [comm@hogg.utexas.edu](mailto:comm@hogg.utexas.edu), call the Hogg Foundation toll free at 1-888-404-4336, or call the Communications Office publication's line at 512-232-6286.



# Back On Track

## *Nationally Recognized Bexar County Project Helps Troubled Youths Stay on the Path to Recovery*

**T**he scientific literature is fairly consistent in finding that a continuum of mental health services maximizes the capacities for juveniles recovering from severe emotional disorders to maintain their medication and counseling regimens.

Nowhere is the need greater than for youths graduating from residential treatment programs, who often return to home and community without the supervision and structural supports necessary to sustain their recovery. Some estimates suggest that as many as 20 percent of youths in the Texas juvenile justice system suffer from severe emotional disorders.

In 2004, the U.S. House Committee on Government Reform's report, *Incarceration of Youth Who are Waiting for Community Mental Health Services in the United States*, found similar conditions across the country, with juvenile detention facilities "housing young people in need of treatment for a range of mental health disorders."

The failure to adequately support juvenile offenders transitioning back to their communities carries significant financial consequences. In 1999, the *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* published a study by Vanderbilt University economist Mark A. Cohen entitled, "The Monetary Value of Saving a High-Risk Youth." In it, Cohen calculated the cost to American taxpayers when a young person drops out of high school and enters a life of crime and substance abuse. His analysis concluded that taken together the present and future costs to government (arrest, trial, prisons) and society (loss of property, violence, etc.) would range from anywhere between \$1.7 to \$2.5 million.

Unfortunately, integrated transitional services can be difficult to come by. The exception is the Bexar County Juvenile Probation Department's Back on Track Program, which provides a seamless continuum of aftercare services to juveniles released from court-ordered placement in the Cyndi Taylor Krier Juvenile Correctional Treatment Center.

In conjunction with The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, the Back on Track Program employs aftercare specialists to initiate the juveniles' reintegration into the community and coordinate services—including mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, employment training, parenting skills and independent living accommodations—that are essential to continued recovery.

"When a juvenile is discharged from a residential treatment center like Krier, the most important priority should be to deploy a level of aftercare supervision and support that does not lose that youth in the community," said Dr. Jeannie Von Stultz, director of Mental Health Services for the Bexar County Juvenile Probation Department.

The Back on Track Program is unique in combining correctional, educational, and medical treatment components to provide juveniles a comprehensive and intensive array of services. In most instances, when a teen is released from the Krier facility, a team of probation officers, counselors, teachers, medical staff, the youth and their families take part in creating an individual treatment program in consultation with psychiatrists with The University of Texas Health Science Center's Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. The Back on Track Program works to ensure that the youths stay within the boundaries of that program

through two aftercare specialists.

Through a partnership with the Center for Health Care Services, some 40 percent of the juveniles in the program receive services from the local mental health authority for disorders ranging from conduct disorder, major depression, psychosis, and post-traumatic stress. Some families prefer to access services through private practitioners or non-profit agencies.

Since being awarded a three-year, \$180,000 grant from the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health in 2003, the Back on Track Program has not looked back. The program has served nearly 80 juveniles, with a success rate of around 77 percent—an astonishing ratio, given intractable obstacles usually experienced when treating this population. Within the first year, Bexar County was reporting how the majority of youths participating in the program were successfully sustaining their recoveries and moving their lives in positive directions.

The successes are not only measured statistically, but in the lives of those who have gone through the program. Just one example is that of Quenten, whose history of violence and substance abuse landed him in Krier in 2002. While there, Quenten earned his GED and even won a \$500 scholarship in a creative writing competition. But upon his release in 2004, troubles at home meant he could not live with his family. Instead, his after-

care counselor managed to have him placed in San Antonio's Turning Point independent living program. When his mother refused to sign the paperwork for financial aid, his aftercare counselor helped him get financial aid necessary to attend San Antonio's St. Phillip's College. Quenten is now working at an HEB grocery store and taking classes to earn his certification as a medical technician.

The attention the program has received was an integral part of The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio being awarded a four-year, \$2 million grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to provide family-focused, outpatient substance abuse and mental health treatments, as well as services to enhance educational and vocational outcomes, and access to resources.

"Our emphasis continues to be on the individual needs of the juvenile—which means frequent and productive contacts with the juvenile, providing them with a variety of supportive resources," Stultz said.

"By frequently and intensely connecting with these youths, we develop a level of trust and a bond of mutual respect. A relationship forms that extends beyond just documenting whether they are attending their appointments or fulfilling the conditions of their probation. These young people begin to realize that they can have a positive impact in their relationships and their environment," Stultz said.

"By helping these juveniles maintain their commitment to recovery and avoid drugs and alcohol, Back on Track helps put them on the right track and avoid behaviors that sent them into the juvenile justice system in the first place," said Carolyn Young, program officer for the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health.

"Such community partnerships are proven to effectively build on local knowledge, capacities, and resources to keep young people moving into training or jobs that can anchor them and lead to productive lives," Young said.

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**--Dr. Jeannie Von Stultz  
Director of Mental Health Services  
Bexar County Juvenile Probation**

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# Hogg Supports Expansion of CIT Training



**Police Officers Frank Webb, Kristen McGray, and Kris Whillock manage and teach the Crisis Intervention Training curriculum for the Houston Police Department.**

## From Page One

specialized techniques he learned through a Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) program offered through his department.

Crisis intervention strategies teach officers how to recognize psychiatric symptoms and to de-escalate potentially dangerous situations so that people in psychological distress can be diverted to facilities or services in a safe and appropriate manner.

Recognizing the importance of the CIT program, the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health has awarded two grants totaling \$173,180 to help expand and enhance the program for law enforcement officers in Texas.

"At a time when law enforcement officers are increasingly being called upon to deal with persons with mental illness, the need for officers to appropriately and safely manage these situations is becoming increasingly important," said the Hogg Foundation's Jeffery R. Patterson, who, along with Reymundo Rodríguez, serves as Hogg Foundation liaison to the project. "It is estimated that in Texas cities whose populations exceed 100,000, anywhere up to 10 percent of all police calls—in both investigations and complaint responses—involve a person either diagnosed with, or suspected of suffering from, a mental illness."

According to officials with the Texas Department of State Health Services, people with serious mental illness who do not receive services are twice as likely to spend time in jail or prison. Perhaps as important as the underlying causes are the ways in which communities, policymakers, law enforcement officials, courts, and corrections administrators are attempting to address these issues in a safe, fair, and cost-effective manner.

Although CIT is not new (it originated in Memphis, Tennessee in 1988), the model has been gradually adopted by police and sheriffs' departments across the country. The Houston Police Department (HPD) implemented a modified version as part of a pilot project in 1999. The feedback was so positive—from both mental health professionals and officers—that the department expanded the program to a goal of training 25 percent of Houston's police force in crisis intervention techniques. Over the past five years, the CIT program grew not only within

the department, but also in other Texas law enforcement agencies, who looked to HPD to train officers in the Greater Houston area and as far away as Dallas, Austin and San Antonio.

Officer Frank Webb, coordinator of the Houston Police Department's CIT program, says that it quickly became obvious that the CIT was a valuable tool for patrol officers in handling individuals in a mental health crisis.

"Generally, we began to receive reports of improved officer confidence in dealing with offenders suspected of having a mental illness and more cases where individuals were being diverted to appropriate services instead of being arrested," Webb stated. "That translated into improved departmental relations with the community."

"The CIT program is diametrically different from the standard training that law officers normally receive," Webb said. "Traditionally, officers are taught to take control of situations through authority, attitude, and—when necessary—force. Crisis intervention training, however, encourages officers to use measured tones, active listening, and firm reassurances to de-escalate tense situations safely and appropriately."

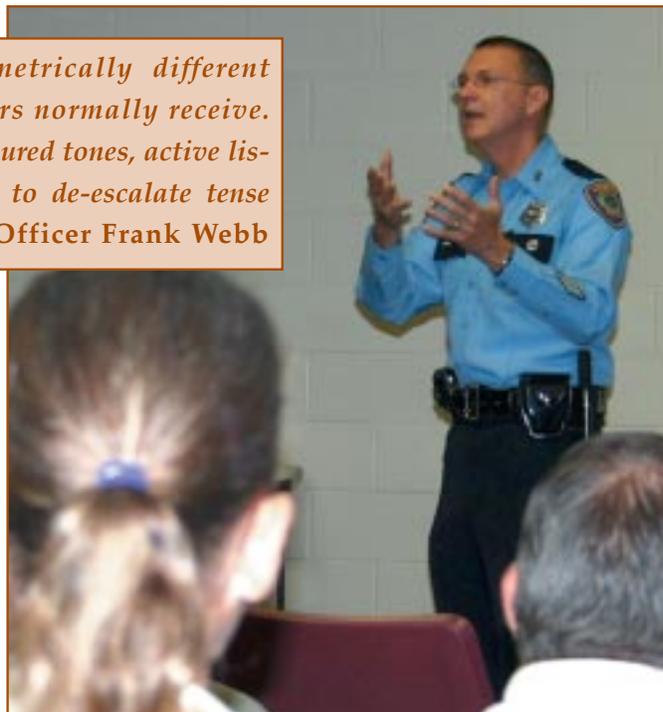
One counselor at Houston's Ben Taub Emergency Psychiatric Center says she has witnessed big differences in the way CIT officers interact with persons with mental illness, largely because "they communicate more effectively and have a better understanding of different mental illnesses and symptoms."

As the reputation of the CIT grew, it became more evident how necessary the program was elsewhere in the state to provide law enforcement with a comprehensive and uniform training program to peacefully resolve crisis situations and divert offenders with mental illness from jails to services. Recognition of the growing needs for such training began to be clearly and consistently voiced by law enforcement agencies, state policymakers, mental health consumers, and advocacy groups.

The HPD model has quickly become the "gold standard" for crisis de-escalation strategies in law enforcement agencies in Texas. Under

*"The CIT program is diametrically different from the training that officers normally receive. Officers are taught to use measured tones, active listening, and firm reassurances to de-escalate tense situations safely."*

**--Officer Frank Webb**



**HPD CIT coordinator Frank Webb conducts frequent trainings, including officers from across the country.**

Webb, the program now consists of four separate curricula—ranging from 8-, 16-, 24-, and 40-hours in duration—that can be tailored to meet specific needs and generate greater numbers of CIT instructors and coordinators within departments.

The costs and resources required of small to medium-sized police and sheriffs' departments to develop and implement CIT for their officers is frequently prohibitive. Nonetheless, the 79th Texas Legislature felt the training important enough to mandate that all veteran Texas law enforcement officers take a required 16 hours of a specialized Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) to fulfill their certification requirements. Lawmakers instituted a similar training requirement for rookie officers in 2003 as part of the Texas Basic Peace Officer Curriculum managed by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education (TCLEOSE).

Until now, expansion of the CIT program has progressed under a strong sense of its effectiveness, but not a formal evaluation that documented those successes. To better understand the operations and document specific outcomes of the program, the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health awarded a grant of \$73,180 to the School of Public Health at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston for Dr. Pamela Diamond to explore the logical links between different activities in the CIT curriculum.

The Hogg Foundation awarded a separate grant of \$100,000 to the Houston Police Department to help facilitate the evaluation and expand the number of HPD officers who will receive crisis intervention training. The police academy will expand its CIT program by two, 40-hour classes (approximately 70 additional officers) in conjunction with TCLEOSE.

Diamond, with the assistance of HPD Officer Kristen McGray, will explore the logical links between the CIT curriculum and its expected outcomes. The intent is to identify processes to inform efforts to improve, expand, and replicate the program. In doing so, Diamond will focus upon three areas.

First, the evaluation will document the benefits of CIT on the availability, access, and appropriateness of training officers and then deploying them across different shifts and patrol regions as a suitable means to respond to incidents involving the mentally ill.

Second, the evaluation will examine how the CIT program has improved opportunities for change at the community and policy levels. CIT grew out of recognition by both stakeholders and law enforcement officers of the need for collaboration to develop policies and procedures to divert persons with mental illness from jail and into appropriate services. Hence, the evaluation will measure whether there has been an increased collaboration among agencies working with persons with mental illnesses, and the frequency and procedures involving such jail diversion.

Finally, the evaluation will examine whether the CIT program has contributed to greater community awareness and mutual understanding involving law enforcement and persons with mental illnesses. One of the core goals of the CIT program is for police departments to develop a level trust and collaboration within the community, especially among the families of persons with mental illness. When families feel that they can trust officers to be helpful in crisis situations, they are more likely to call officers earlier in the crisis, when intervention can have its best outcome.

The Houston Police Department has traditionally cited the last achievement as being a certifiable benefit. In Houston, for example, the process for individuals needing emergency mental health evaluation has been dramatically streamlined as a result of the cooperation between law enforcement and the mental health system. Previously, it took hours for an officer to complete a seven-page assessment request form, that needed to be signed by a judge before an individual could even be taken to a facility. Today, after having built cooperative arrangements, officers take an individual directly to a mental health facility, complete a one-page form, then return to service—a process that now takes about 15 minutes.

Officers say that such collaboration also improves law enforcement's rapport with the community—particularly the families of persons

with mental illnesses. If family members feel comfortable in calling law enforcement in tense situations, then interventions can be made earlier, when better outcomes are achieved. The evaluation will attempt to measure the confidence and attitudes of consumers, families, and officers in communicating with one another and in resolving crises peacefully.

There are already programs in place to survey police cadets prior to and after completing the CIT to evaluate their knowledge of mental illness and their ability to de-escalate situations involving individuals who may have mental illness. These data allow for surveying these same officers after six months and later in their careers to determine what experiences on the street have prompted changes in their attitudes or behaviors. Follow-up surveys will also measure these officers' perceptions of the usefulness of the CIT program and their satisfaction with the refresher courses.

Ultimately, the project will help identify those aspects of the CIT program that are most effective and inform program development for departments across Texas. Most importantly, it will provide officers on the street with skills to better deal with persons with mental illnesses.

## Computer Simulation Helps Officers Better Understand Schizophrenic Symptoms

To assist Houston Police officers in honing their skills at identifying and understanding the symptoms and feelings of mental illness, Janssen Pharmaceutical has developed a computerized virtual reality program that approximates the auditory and visual experiences of someone experiencing a psychotic episode.

With the simple set up of a laptop computer and specially devised earphones, officers experience firsthand a four-minute-long simulation of a psychotic episode. Frequently, symptoms of schizophrenia cause perplexity that manifests itself as extreme agitation and hallucinations—commonly "hearing voices."

The scenario of the computer program tries to simulate that experience by portraying an inner-dialogue of an individual going to a pharmacy to refill a prescription. Difficulty in locating the pharmacist, combined with an increasingly incessant number of internal voices both confuse and castigate the subject until he is irritated and disoriented to the brink of paranoia and potentially dangerous behavior. The pharmacist is shown treating this virtual customer normally, but when he tells the patient that he needs to contact the doctor for a refill, this confused virtual character believes "they are all against me."

Such an experience can be valuable in underscoring to officers trained in Crisis Intervention Techniques, who are taught to speak to subjects calmly, repeating phrases and instructions over and over to become the prevailing "voice" of the many that someone experiencing schizophrenic symptoms may be hearing. The intent is for the person to distinguish the voices and eventually focus on what the officer is trying to communicate.

Officer Dennis Eckenrode of HPD's South Central described the experience for *Badge and Gun* as "sensory."

It sounds as if you're in a crowded room and voices are coming from all over the place," Eckenrode said. "I now have a better perception of what a schizophrenic person goes through and what they hear."

The goal is to help officers recognize a potential mental illness and better understand how the strategies help to make managing a person with mental illness much safer. HPD Officer Frank Webb, who coordinates the CIT program for the Houston Police Academy, said the department hopes that each of the 600 CIT-trained officers will have the chance to utilize the computerized system as part of their continuing education coursework.

## Final Grant Awards 2005

Since 1940, the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health has responded to its mandate by funding service projects, research efforts, and policy initiatives throughout the state. The following are grants awarded through August of 2005. Where indicated, the award amounts include the total amount committed over multiple years, pending the grantee's performance on the previous year's objectives.

### ► **Project FOCUS (For Optimal Care of Underserved Seniors)**

**Department of Community and Human Development  
City of El Paso**

*El Paso*

This two-year grant supports a collaborative effort to provide mental health treatment and wellness services to an elderly population that is traditionally unlikely to access such services. The overall aims of the project are to improve mental health services for frail, older adults and to expand access to mental health services through collaboration and novel peer counseling.

**\$181,502**

### ► **Public Defender Mental Health Unit El Paso Public Defender's Office**

*El Paso*

This three-year grant seeks to expand upon a pilot mental health unit in the El Paso Public Defender's Office for the early assessment, identification, and referral for criminal defendants who have a mental illness among criminal defendants the promotion of the mental health component of a health symposium to raise awareness about mental illnesses among students at the University of Houston. The Mental Health Unit provides specially trained legal counsel and social workers to meet the needs and challenges of special needs clientele.

**\$300,000**

### ► **B.E.S.T. (Building Exceptional Students Together) II Program**

**Community Family Centers -  
Centros Familiares de la Comunidad**

*Houston*

This two-year commitment supports an innovative prevention/intervention program designed to identify and address mental health disparities as Hispanic adolescents make the transition from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school. The funds will support an array of mental health services, including counseling case management, and wrap around services.

**\$176,000**

### ► **Fairweather Family Lodge Program San Antonio Urban Ministries, Inc.**

*San Antonio*

This four-year award supports the Fairweather Lodge program, which provides support for developing self-esteem, responsibility, and independent living for chronically ill individuals. The Lodge provides a structured living environment where individuals with mental illness and their families can live and work within a compassionate community.

**\$118,500**

### ► **Guadalupe Valley Trauma Project Guadalupe Valley Family Violence Shelter, Inc.**

*Seguin*

This two-year award supports the implementation and evaluation of a trauma model of psychological services for victims of domestic violence.

**\$100,000**

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## Winners Announced for Hogg Journalism Award in Mental Health Reporting

Winners have been announced for the inaugural James S. Hogg Journalism Award for Mental Health Reporting by The University of Texas at Austin's School of Journalism and Hogg Foundation for Mental Health.

The awards recognize exemplary reporting of mental health issues that inform, educate, or empower the people of Texas on issues related to mental health and mental illness. The award is named for former Texas Governor James Stephen Hogg, who pursued a career as a newspaper editor before his career in politics, and for whom the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health was named.

In the print category, first place went to Patrick Walker of the Waxahachie Daily Light for his September 2004 article "Broken Dreams: Decuir's Hope Their Story Helps Change Attitudes." The article relates the struggles and rewards of Diane and Lionel Decuir, who, over the course of their 40-year marriage, have succeeded in the face of Diane's diagnosis of both bipolar and obsessive-compulsive disorders.

Second place in the print category was awarded to Andrea Ball of the Austin American-Statesman, for her January 2005 article, "Hospitals Seeing More Mentally Ill." The story documented the startling rise of persons experiencing psychiatric crises in hospital emergency rooms following changes to Texas' public mental health system. Marina Pisano of the San Antonio Express News took third place for her article, "Mind-Body Connection," which explored the interrelationship of mental and physical health.

First place in the Broadcast Division went to Waco reporter Bianca Castro and photographer Pascual Rodriguez of KWTX-TV for a February 2005 story about treating post-traumatic stress disorder among female veterans of the Iraq War being cared for in Veterans Affairs Hospitals in Waco and Fort Hood. The piece followed a congressional investigation that suggested that VA hospitals were not adequately prepared to handle increasing numbers of PTSD cases of soldiers returning from Iraq.

Reporter Wendy Rigby and photographer Richard Woods of KENS-TV in San Antonio were awarded second place for an April 2004 story on research at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio in which brain imaging technology is employed to improve diagnosis and treatment of bipolar disorder.

As part of the award, first place winners will receive \$1,000, second place winners will receive \$500, and third place winners will receive \$250.

"We want to congratulate these award winners for their terrific work in stimulating discussion about mental health issues and helping to reduce stigma and discrimination," said Jeffery R. Patterson, director of communications for the Hogg Foundation.

"We certainly wish to applaud these writers for highlighting the complexities of mental health issues," said Lorraine Branham, director of the UT School of Journalism. "We are pleased to recognize the best in this field and to encourage continued excellence in reporting on this topic."

For more information, call the Hogg Foundation at 512-471-5041, or the UT School of Journalism at 512-471-1845. More information is available on the award web site at: [www.hogg.utexas.edu/pages/jaward.html](http://www.hogg.utexas.edu/pages/jaward.html).



Gov. James Stephen Hogg

# No More Victims, Inc.'s Story of Commitment Fuels Lifetime Television Network Movie

When actress Jami Gertz chose to portray the founder of No More Victims, Inc. in the Lifetime Television movie *Fighting the Odds: The Marilyn Gambrell Story*, she asked the teens in the program at Houston's Smiley High School for a few pointers.

"They said, 'you're going to have to cry — a lot,'" Gambrell smiles.

In Gambrell's defense, on some days it would be hard for anyone to keep from crying. Each day, Gambrell and her partner, Perry Beasley, reach out to dozens of hurt and angry children with incarcerated parents who live in a Houston ghetto so riddled by crime, poverty, and drug abuse that they cannot imagine escaping.

The movie, which had its premier broadcast on August 22, is based upon the experiences of Beasley (portrayed by Ernie Hudson), Gambrell, and the dozens of Smiley High School teens whose stories—conveyed with a casualness that reveals how disturbingly common they are—had originally inspired the two former Harris County parole officers who had grown tired of watching their clients cycle through jail while their children were neglected and abused.

The two quit their jobs to form No More Victims, Inc. (NMVI), an innovative program of educational and emotional support to help these children cope with having an incarcerated parent and divert them from their own paths of crime, substance abuse, and desperation.

Reymundo Rodríguez, the project's program officer and liaison at the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, said that when Gambrell initially approached him at the Foundation, "she didn't have much more than the idea and a rock solid determination to help these children."

"Marilyn and the No More Victims, Inc. program is the best example of a foundation giving a grant because someone has a good idea and is passionate about seeing it achieved. We were fortunate to work with Marilyn and provide technical assistance to expand the program. Five years later, she is receiving well-deserved recognition for a terrific program that has made a difference in the lives of these youths."

With funding commitments totaling \$315,240 over three years from both the Hogg Foundation and the Houston Endowment, No More Victims, Inc. set up its pilot program at M.B. Smiley High School in Houston's North Forest Independent School District in 2000.

The choice of M.B. Smiley High School was a good fit. Of the roughly 1,500 students enrolled at Smiley, 40 percent have a parent who has either been, or currently is, in prison. The school itself is surrounded by a community afflicted with high levels of delinquency, alcohol and drug abuse, teen pregnancies, violent crime, and gang activity.

NMVI consists of daily sessions in which students gather for group discussions, followed by a curriculum that teaches them how to cope with their problems, resolve interpersonal conflicts, and channel their emotions into constructive endeavors and away from violence, addiction, and gangs.

"Statistics indicate that these children are five times more likely to end up being incarcerated themselves, and are far



No More Victims, Inc. Program Director Marilyn Gambrell (above, left) poses with actress Jami Gertz on the set of the Lifetime Television movie *Fighting the Odds* that features her story. At left, a promotional ad for the film.



more susceptible to substance abuse, behavioral problems, school dropouts, gangs, and teen pregnancy," Gambrell said. Students presenting severe psychological/psychiatric needs outside the scope of the curriculum are referred to an appropriate mental health professional, with NMVI staff even arranging transportation to appointments and appropriate follow-ups. Most importantly, at each session students' feelings of self worth and respect are constantly nurtured and reinforced. Students are hugged and told that they are valued, precious, and loved.

In its first two years, NMVI's results were dramatic. Disciplinary referrals for participating students dropped by more than half, gang violence campus-wide dropped by 70 percent, and attendance improved by two-thirds. Nearly 100 students participating in No More Victims have graduated since it started. Many stay involved and help Gambrell with the kids that followed them into the halls of Smiley High School.

The truly inspirational story attracted a lot of attention. In 2002 the White House touted the program as a model of community intervention, and it was featured in *U.S. News & World Report*, and on *CNN Newsnight with Aaron Brown*, and *60 Minutes II*.

The growing attention No More Victims, Inc. received caught the eye of the film's executive producer, Craig Baumgarten. A few months later, Baumgarten's co-executive producer, Stanley M. Brooks, and director Andy Wolk traveled to Houston to meet Gambrell. Within months a deal was struck to feature the program and its founders.

The producers have said that of all their hopes for the film, perhaps the greatest is that the story serves to make people aware of the plight of not just the children of Smiley High School, but of the teens who face similar circumstances, and it inspires others to give them a chance.

To the folks who have personally experienced No More Victims, Inc., there is little doubt it will happen.

"Teachers and administrators have witnessed students—including gang members—searching for [Gambrell] in the hallways. Once they find [her], they have literally fallen into their arms crying and it seems like they are clinging for their lives," Assistant Principal Reginald Spivey says. "Smiley needs No More Victims, Inc. It is working. Our children are proof."

Although it premiered on August 22, the Lifetime Network says that it plans a number of rebroadcasts. Check your local listings for broadcast times.



Actors Ernie Hudson (left) and Jami Gertz portray the founders of No More Victims, Inc., a program that works to break the cycle of substance abuse and despair for children of incarcerated parents.

**The University of Texas at Austin**

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**The Hogg Foundation's Mission**

*To develop, support, evaluate, and promote culturally relevant mental health services, research, public policies, and education.*

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# Hogg Foundation Announces *Changes in Strategic Priorities*

**I**n order to improve the focus of its time and resources, the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health has announced that it will no longer accept unsolicited proposals for mental health projects in Texas. Instead, the Foundation will focus its efforts in three priority areas:

- **Integrated Mental and Physical Health Care**
- **Culturally and Linguistically Effective Mental Health Services**
- **Mental Health Workforce Development**

By focusing upon these priorities, the Hogg Foundation can be more strategic and effective in addressing mental health needs. In the coming months, the Foundation is expected to solicit proposals to carry out the specific objectives in these priority areas. For those wishing to receive more information about the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health's new strategic directions, or to receive notification when a formal Request for Proposals is announced, please mail your name, affiliation, and address to:

**Hogg Foundation for Mental Health  
The University of Texas at Austin  
P.O. Box 7998  
Austin, Texas 78713-7998**

You may also choose to send your information via email to: [comm@hogg.utexas.edu](mailto:comm@hogg.utexas.edu).